

# **30 Days to A More Resilient Faith**

*Embracing the God of the Storm*

*By Barb Wooler with Wayne Hannah*

## **Questions**

### **Day #1: The Crucible of Crisis**

1. Have you or someone you know ever said, “I thank God for my cancer”, or an earthquake, or some other great trial or loss? How could this be true? Share your story.
2. What are some lessons you have learned or gains achieved through suffering that make it suffering worth it (not that we have a choice)?
3. Even unbelievers have said they thank God for cancer, or some other hard thing that has happened. How might someone walking with Jesus through suffering mean this in a way that an unbeliever could not?

### **Day #2: God Uses Crisis to Move People – Geographically**

1. Has God ever used a crisis or hardship to move you geographically? Describe it and how things turned out.
2. Can you think of Bible stories (other than those cited above) where God achieved something important in someone’s life by relocating them?

### **Day #3: God Uses Crisis to Move People – Changing Hearts**

1. On Easter Sunday morning, Jesus found His disciples “together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders...” (John 20:19). Not many weeks later we find them pouring into the streets (Acts 2) and public places (Acts 3 & 5:18-25) boldly speaking out in Jesus’ name in defiance of the Jewish leaders’ orders. What made the difference for the disciples so that they came to willingly accept suffering they knew would come as they walked in obedience to the Lord?
2. Imagine a friend who recently lost a loved one that they had fervently prayed God would heal. Describe what the below two responses might look like:
  - Lovingly yielding in faith to this difficult trial knowing God can only act in love towards His children.
  - Harden their hearts against God because of the outcome He allowed.

### **Day #4: God Uses Crisis to Move People – Changing Minds**

Think of a time when you suffered because you were slow to obey something God wanted you to do (forgive someone, say something to someone, do something, etc.)

1. What did that situation teach you and what advice would you give to others based on what you learned?
2. What might be at the core of a believers obstinance in accepting and obeying the path God has indicated?

### **Day #5: The WHYs and WHATs Behind Suffering**

The devotional says, “When it comes to the WHYs behind trials and crises, filling in the ocean-wide gaps between our knowledge and God’s is sketchy at best and dangerous at worst. Too often we get it all wrong, which only makes it harder for the person in crisis.”

Share an experience you know (in the Bible or otherwise) where someone “got it wrong” about the Whys behind someone else’s suffering.

1. How did the wrong conclusion make it harder for the person in the difficulty?
2. What lesson can we learn about trying to divine the reasons behind suffering?

### **Day #6: All That We Don’t know About Trouble**

1. Of the four truths about suffering listed here –expected, purposeful, reassuring, good – which one do you find especially strengthening vis-à-vis suffering? Why did you choose that one?
2. What does it mean that faith bridges gaps and connects the dots during times of deep trials?

### **Day #7: The Uncomfortable Truth About Trouble: God Could Stop It!**

1. Why do you think the truth that God is sovereign and in control over all makes some feel confident and others feel fearful?
2. What would be some underlying beliefs (true or misconceived) about God’s character that each reaction – confidence and fear – reveals?

### **Day #8: The Uncomfortable Truth about Trouble: God is Complicit!**

1. How might we be comforted by the knowledge that Heaven (God/good) and Hell (Satan/evil) meet together in suffering?
2. How could this perspective change our response to trials and hardship?
3. Do you think the scene in heaven that resulted in Job’s great trials still happens today, or was that just a unique occurrence? (Consider Zachariah 3:1 & Revelation 12:10b.)

### **Day #9: The Strategic Place of Prayer in Crisis**

1. Is a prayer really answered if God’s answer to our prayer looks totally different from what we expect?
2. Share experiences where God’s answer to your prayer was very different than you expected. (For example, Habakkuk asked God to judge Israel for their disobedience, never imagining that God’s answer would be in the form of judgment by a nation even more wicked than Israel.)
3. What word could you use to describe how it makes you feel to know that God’s answer to your prayer may be different than you were expecting. (Words such as comforted, frustrated, assured, angry, etc.)

### **Day #10: A Crisis Prayer God Didn’t Forget**

1. Has God ever answered a prayer that you had forgotten you prayed? Describe.

2. Have you ever suspected that you experienced an answer to a prayer that was prayed by someone who has probably completely forgotten about that prayer or may even be deceased?
3. How might this fact impact our prayer life, that our loving Heavenly Father stands over space and time and never forgets our prayers?

### **Day #11: The Blessing of ISIS**

1. Describe a time in your life when you saw God use a negative, unjust, or even evil situation or event to, in the end, bless you or someone else. What was the good that He brought about in the end?
2. Is this the same as saying that catalyst – the unjust or evil thing itself – is good? Explain.

### **Day #12: Part 1: Groaning Spoken Here**

Read Romans 8:26

1. In the middle of the darkness and pain of great loss, how might the fact that God the Holy Spirit is praying for us impact us? How might this truth strengthen us?
2. What are some words you could use to describe how you feel knowing that God's Spirit is interceding for you in your "groaning"?
3. Describe a time when you sensed that the invisible hands of God were upholding you. Based on this verse, could this be due to not just the prayers of others but also of the Holy Spirit?

### **Day #13: Part 2 (Groaning): An Aria Breaks Forth**

Describe a time when you or someone you know chose to "sing an aria" during suffering instead of giving in to bitterness or anger.

1. What impact did the sad but beautiful "aria" have on those "hearing" it?
2. How much, if any, should the knowledge that others are listening and observing us in our grief impact us?
  - What could be some negative impacts?
  - What could be some positive impacts?

### **Day #14: Cleaning House – Chaff, Dross, and Dust**

Read 1 Peter 1:6-7

1. What impact do you think Peter intended when he wrote these words to believers passing through dark and stormy times of strong persecution?
2. Look back on a "fiery trial" you have experienced. Could you say that this hard experience ended up purifying and strengthening your faith and trust towards God? Explain.
3. Peter says we can "rejoice" as we suffer grief in all kinds of trials. How might this form of "rejoicing" be *similar* and also *different* from the rejoicing we experience at, for example, the birth of a child or another happy event?

### **Day #15: An Argument from Silence: The Un-Prayer**

1. How can the way Paul prayed for his Thessalonian friends be explained? How might it instruct us in praying for persecuted believers?

2. Amazingly, even today church leaders in China and other places often say, “Do not pray that the persecution stops.” Why would they say this?
3. Do you know someone who is being persecuted for his or her faith? Take time now to pray for that person or group in a way that is consistent with how Paul prayed for persecuted believers. If you don’t know believers being persecuted for their faith, find a story at Voice of the Martyrs ([www.persecution.com](http://www.persecution.com)) or Open Doors ([www.opendoors.org](http://www.opendoors.org)) websites.

### **Day #16: Part 1: No Graven Image**

1. What kind of “graven image” do people typically erect about God?
2. How do they respond when He shatters their graven image by responding differently from what they expected (including a response of seeming silence)?
3. What do you think would be a God-honor response to these inevitable “surprises”?

### **Day #17: Part 2: No Graven Image – Crises of Faith**

1. Can you relate to the experiences of the men cited here, who were disillusioned by God? Describe an experience when the “God that is” clashed with the “God of your imagination”.
2. How did you survive this crisis of faith?
3. What advice could you give others who are in the midst of this kind of crisis of faith?

### **Day #18: Part 3: No Graven Image – Obedience is The Highest Service**

1. In this apocryphal story\*, how was Peter’s “obedience” actually self-serving?
2. Give examples of ways that, sometimes, our obedience to God might also be self-serving.
3. While we can never fully know our deepest motives, how can we avoid the example of Peter in this story, following instead the example of John?

*\*possibly used for instruction in the early Church*

### **Day #19: Part 4: No Graven Image – Which Image Will We Embrace?**

1. What “stunning array of evidence” (“Conclusion 1”) have you experienced in your life as a believer that unbelievers might point to saying it proves your faith vain, worthless, or useless?
2. Describe similar examples of this in Scripture. (Examples might be the disciples on the first two days after the crucifixion, or Job’s wife, or many other stories where the individual was never proven right.)
3. Elliot’s Conclusion 2 says, “It is in our times of acceptance of what is given that God gives Himself.” What does this mean? How is this acceptance different from sighing resignation?

### **Day #20: Sometimes Knowing What the Reason Is Not Is Enough**

1. How would you explain the suffering of God to someone else, whether to a believer or not-yet-believer?
2. Is the fact that God suffers a strength of God, or a weakness? Explain.
3. Which attributes of God listed below are evident in His willingness to suffer? Why?

Eternal	Good
Never changes	Just
All-powerful	Merciful
All-knowing	Gracious
All-wise	Loving and compassionate
Everywhere present	Holy
Self-existent	Glorious
Faithful and true	Immaterial

### **Day #21: Part 1: Survivor's Guide to Suffering – Wonder**

1. What conclusion do you think God was leading Job towards by asking him so many impossible questions?
2. How could such a conclusion help us rise above impossibly difficult circumstances that don't seem to make sense? Give examples.

### **Day #22: Part 2: Survivor's Guide to Suffering – Worship**

1. Has worship ever lifted you above deep pain and sadness even if just for a moment? Describe what did that look and felt like.
2. Is this simply a function of the emotions, or of reason/logic, or both? Elaborate.

### **Day #23: Part 3: Survivor's Guide to Suffering – Staying Under His Wings**

1. Agnostics and atheist's claim that the horrible suffering on this planet is proof that, if God exists, He cannot be both loving *and* all-powerful. How do you resolve this enigma in your own mind (i.e. what loving purpose could an all-powerful God be achieving through suffering)?
2. Do you think Shakespeare's anthropomorphic description of mankind's suffering "striking God on the face" is accurate? Explain.
3. Do you believe that God feels our pain? Why? Can you think of a Bible verse or passage that proves your belief?

### **Day #24: Splash Overs of Hell**

1. Imagine you are Daniel. How do you think he might describe his "splash-over of hell" in the run-up to and including his ordeal in the lions' den?
  - And how might he have described his "splash-over of heaven"?
2. Describe a poignant "splash over" of hell you have experienced, where, in the midst of it, you discovered a "splash over from heaven" by finding Jesus in the midst of it.

### **Day #25: Part 1: Prayer – When the Heavens are Like Brass**

1. The Bible identifies the key to Jesus' powerful prayer life as being His reverent submission, as evidenced in the phrase, "Not my will but yours be done."
2. Some today suggest that, while it was right for Jesus in to pray "not my will by yours be done," for us to pray that way today indicates a lack of faith; they claim that this prayer is simply giving ourselves (and our belief in God) an "out" if God doesn't answer.

3. Is praying, “Not my will but yours be done” indicating a lack of faith or reverent submission? What do you think?

### **Day #26: Part 2: Prayer – Worship in Reverent Submission**

1. What are some common issues debated today that can make believers struggle with doubt similar to how Templeton struggled?
2. How could a person facing genuine doubt respond with *reverent submission* as Billy Graham did in stark contrast to Templeton? What does it look like?
3. What can a believer do to avoid the error that Charles Templeton fell into?

### **Day #27: Part 1: Watch Your Mouth! – Job**

1. Have you noticed the sudden power a thought can take on the moment it is spoken? Describe an experience you have had or observed where, the more something is said out loud, the more powerful and even true it seems to become.
2. Does this mean we can never express out loud our honest questions, “edgier ponderings”, and even doubts?
3. How can we guard against being led astray when expressing genuine thoughts and ponderings we have about our faith?

### **Day#28: Part 2: Watch Your Mouth! – Jeremiah & Jonah**

1. Jeremiah accused God to His face saying, “You tricked me!” and so did Jonah, who accused God of being wrong in forgiving the wicked Ninevites. Yet neither of them received the “dressing down” that God gave Job, who disparaged God in the eyes of others in order to justify himself.
2. How are these three cases different? Why did God call out Job while seemingly overlooking Jeremiah’s and Jonah’s accusations made to His face?
3. What lessons can be drawn from these examples of how we make our complaints about and before God?

### **Day #29: Our Happy God**

1. What difference does it make in our daily lives to know that God is now and will forevermore be Happy?
2. What are the implications of this truth for us right this moment and for our eternal futures?
3. What are some words that describe how this truth may make believers feel?

### **Day #30: The Parable of the Little Kite**

1. “The wind will blow – which is fine because we’re made for it.” Would you agree that we are made for “windy” times?
2. Do we, like kites, merely survive the wind, or do we actually *need it* to be our best selves? Elaborate.
3. How important is it for the kite be tethered to someone on the ground holding the string? What happens if it is no longer tethered? What implications might this hold when applying this metaphor to believers trying to survive life’s powerful gusts?

This metaphor is limited and can go in several directions; so just run with it!

**Page 72: PART 2, Discipled by Pain – One Man’s Story**

1. Nazareth response...or the response of faith?
2. So which will it be? Get a Savior that works like we want Him to work and does what we want Him to do? Or will we choose to be okay with what God wants to do, when He wants to do it, and in the way He wants to do it?